



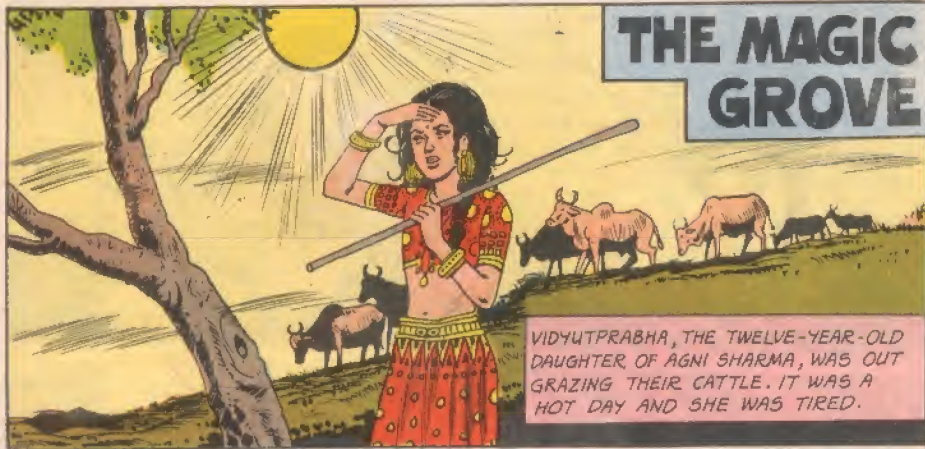
No. 168 Rs. 3 50

THE MAGIC GROVE



A JAIN STORY

THE MAGIC GROVE



VIDYUTPRABHA, THE TWELVE-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER OF AGNI SHARMA, WAS OUT GRAZING THEIR CATTLE. IT WAS A HOT DAY AND SHE WAS TIRED.

WHEN HER MOTHER DIED, FOUR YEARS AGO, THE BURDEN OF RUNNING THE HOUSEHOLD, HAD FALLEN ON HER.



SHE HAD TRIED TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM, SOON AFTER HER MOTHER'S DEATH.

FATHER, I FIND IT DIFFICULT TO RUN THE HOUSEHOLD ALONE. WHY DON'T YOU MARRY AGAIN?



IT'S A GOOD IDEA, VIDYUTPRABHA. I'LL DO AS YOU SAY.



BUT AGNI SHARMA'S SECOND WIFE WAS LAZY AND SHIRKED WORK.

AND NOW THAT SHE HAS A DAUGHTER, MY WORK HAS DOUBLED.

ANYWAY, I HAVE ONLY MYSELF TO BLAME. I WANTED MORE LEISURE AND LOST EVEN WHAT LITTLE I HAD.

SUDDENLY —

WHAT'S THAT? WHO'S THERE?

HISS!
HISS

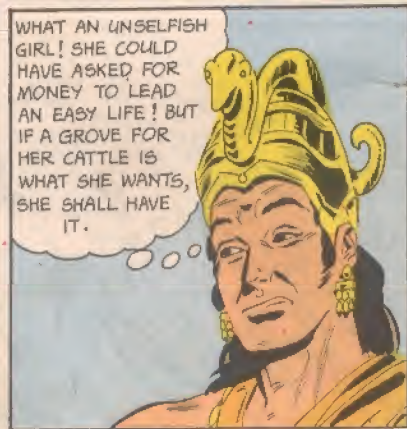
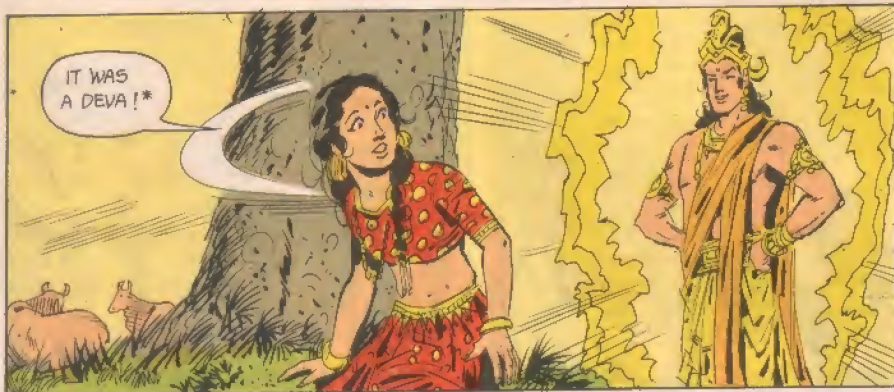
A SNAKE!

DON'T BE AFRAID. I WILL NOT HARM YOU.

SOME SNAKE CHARMERS ARE AFTER ME. PLEASE PROTECT ME.

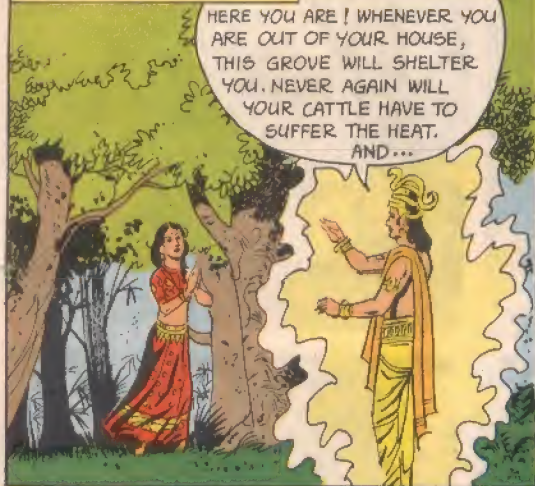
IT MAY BE A SNAKE. BUT IT IS IN TROUBLE AND NEEDS MY HELP.





THE NEXT MOMENT, WONDER OF WONDERS, A SHADY GROVE APPEARED ABOVE VIDYUTPRABHA'S HEAD. IT HAD TREES LADEN WITH JUICY FRUIT AND FRAGRANT FLOWERS.

HERE YOU ARE! WHENEVER YOU ARE OUT OF YOUR HOUSE, THIS GROVE WILL SHELTER YOU. NEVER AGAIN WILL YOUR CATTLE HAVE TO SUFFER THE HEAT. AND...



...IF EVER YOU NEED ME, YOU ONLY HAVE TO THINK OF ME. I'LL BE THERE.



AS SOON AS THE DEVA VANISHED —

AH! GRAZING THE CATTLE WILL NO LONGER BE A TEDIOUS, TIRING, TASK.



AND AFTER A DAY IN THIS DELIGHTFUL, COOL GROVE MY CHORES AT HOME, TOO, WILL NO LONGER BE TIRESOME.



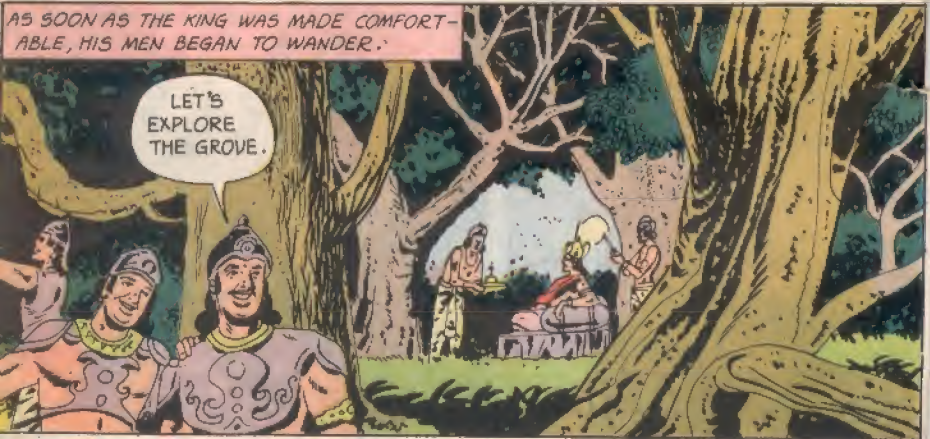
WITH THESE PLEASANT THOUGHTS, SHE SOON FELL ASLEEP.



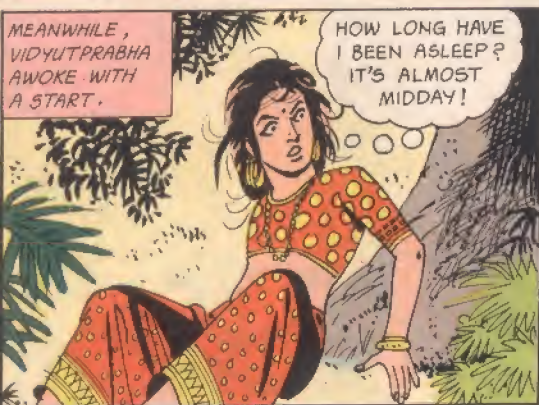
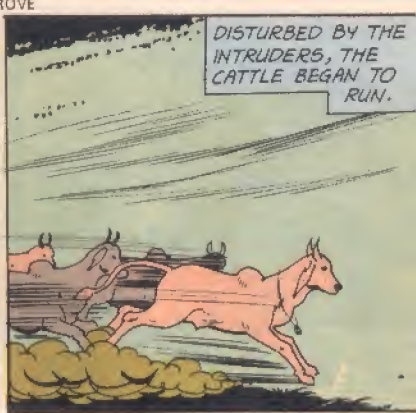
A FEW MINUTES LATER, THE KING OF PATALIPUTRA, CAME BY WITH HIS RETINUE.



AS SOON AS THE KING WAS MADE COMFORT-
ABLE, HIS MEN BEGAN TO WANDER.



LET'S
EXPLORE
THE GROVE.



SUDDENLY —



* CELESTIAL NYMPH

THEN GO TO HER
AND TELL HER
THAT I WANT TO
MAKE HER MY
QUEEN.



O WONDROUS MAID,
OUR KING WISHES
TO WED YOU. ARE
YOU WILLING?

IT WOULD BE
MORE PROPER
FOR YOU TO
SPEAK TO MY
FATHER, SIR.



WHO IS YOUR
FATHER? WHERE
CAN I FIND
HIM?

WE LIVE IN THE
FIRST VILLAGE
THAT YOU SEE
OUTSIDE THIS
GROVE.



THE MINISTER HAD NO TROUBLE FINDING THE
HOUSE OF AGNI SHARMA.

SIR, I COME WITH A
PROPOSAL FOR THE
HAND OF YOUR
DAUGHTER WHO
TENDS COWS IN
THE FOREST
NEAR BY.

FOR VIDYUTPRABHA?
BUT WHO IS IT
FROM?



THE KING OF
PATALIPUTRA.

THE KING OF
PATALIPUTRA?
I DON'T
UNDERSTAND.

WHEN THE MINISTER TOLD HIM ALL
THAT HAD HAPPENED IN THE FOREST—

I AM HONOURED,
SIR. PLEASE LEAD
ME TO HIS MAJESTY.

WHEN THEY STOOD BEFORE THE KING —

GOOD SIR,
I WISH TO
MARRY YOUR
DAUGHTER.

I AM
HONOURED,
YOUR
MAJESTY.

IT IS NOT PROPER
THAT MY QUEEN'S
FATHER LIVE IN
POVERTY. HENCEFORTH THE
REVENUE OF TWELVE
VILLAGES SHALL BE YOURS;
AND YOUR DAUGHTER'S
NEW NAME SHALL BE
ARAMASHOBHA.

SENDING THE MINISTER AHEAD
TO ARRANGE A FIT RECEPTION,
THE KING LEFT FOR PATALI-
PUTRA WITH ARAMASHOBHA
AND HIS RETINUE.

AT PATALIPUTRA, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HER LIFE, ARAMASHOBHA LED A LIFE OF EASE AND COMFORT."



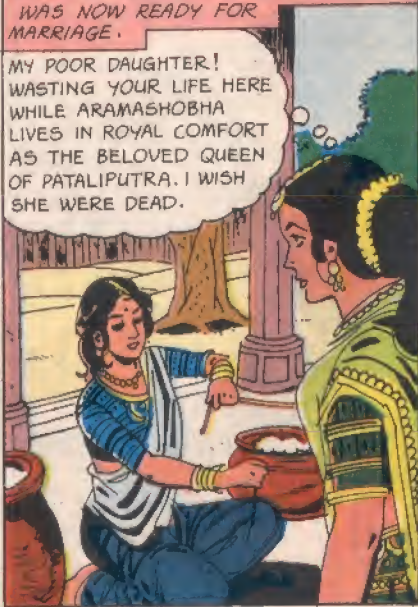
MEANWHILE HER STEP-MOTHER WAS BURNING WITH ENVY AT HER GOOD FORTUNE.

I SHOULD NEVER
HAVE LET THE
GIRL GO OUT TO
GRAZE THE COWS.



AS THE YEARS PASSED, HER ANGER
GREW. BESIDES, HER OWN DAUGHTER
WAS NOW READY FOR
MARRIAGE.

MY POOR DAUGHTER!
WASTING YOUR LIFE HERE
WHILE ARAMASHOBHA
LIVES IN ROYAL COMFORT
AS THE BELOVED QUEEN
OF PATALIPUTRA. I WISH
SHE WERE DEAD.





THERE ! NO ONE
WILL SUSPECT THAT
IT'S POISONED !
LEAST OF ALL
THAT GIRL !



SHE PUT IT INTO A POT ...



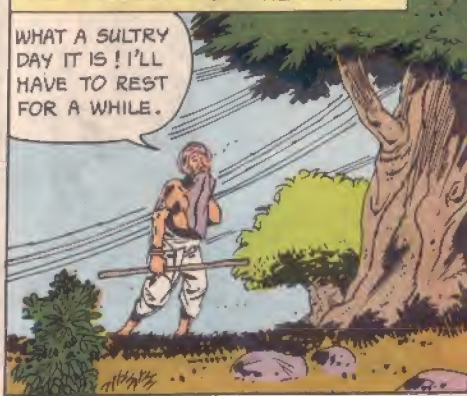
...AND TOOK IT TO HER HUSBAND .

ASK HER NOT
TO SHARE IT WITH
ANYONE. THEY
MAY MAKE FUN
OF OUR HUMBLE
GIFT.

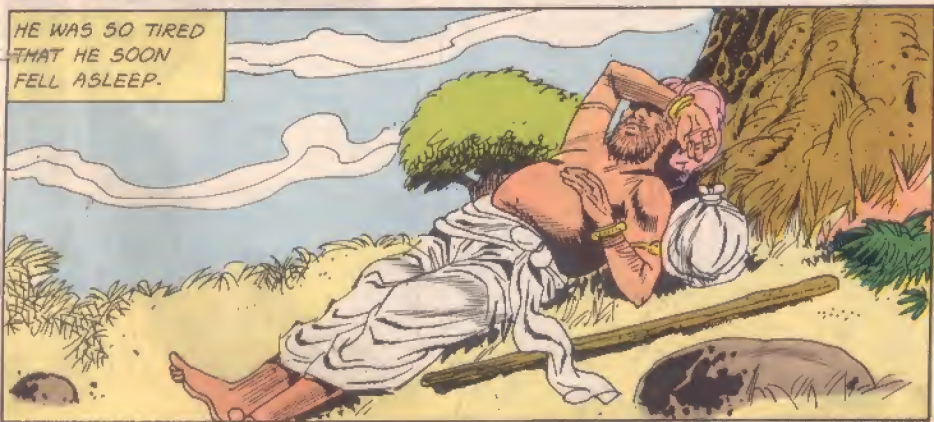


TAKING THE POT, AGNI SHARMA SET OUT
FOR PATLIPUTRA. ON THE WAY —

WHAT A SULTRY
DAY IT IS ! I'LL
HAVE TO REST
FOR A WHILE .



HE WAS SO TIRED
THAT HE SOON
FELL ASLEEP.



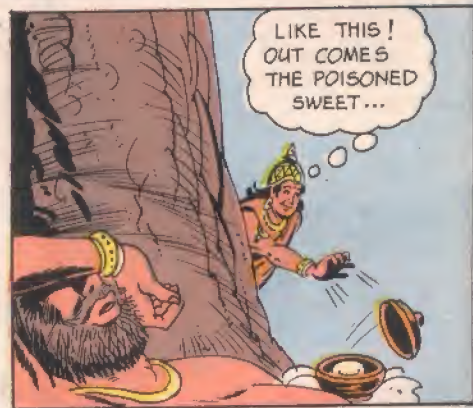
HEARING HIS SNORES,
A YAKSHA* WHO
WAS ON THAT TREE,
CAME OUT.



WHAT DOES MY SIXTH
SENSE TELL ME?
ARAMASHOBHA'S STEP-
MOTHER WANTS TO
POISON HER!



NO! NO! NO!
NOT WHEN I'M
AROUND! HOW
DO I PREVENT
IT?



LIKE THIS!
OUT COMES
THE POISONED
SWEET...



...AND IN
GOES THIS
ONE!



OH! OH!
JUST IN
TIME!

A-A-A-AH! I'VE BEEN ASLEEP A LONG WHILE. I'D BETTER HURRY AND DELIVER THIS POT.



HE PICKED UP THE POT AND CONTINUED WALKING.



WHEN HE REACHED THE PALACE, HE WAS LED BEFORE THE KING.

MAY YOUR MAJESTY EVER PROSPER!

WELCOME, SIR. WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?



MY WIFE HAS SENT THIS SMALL GIFT FOR THE QUEEN, HER DAUGHTER.

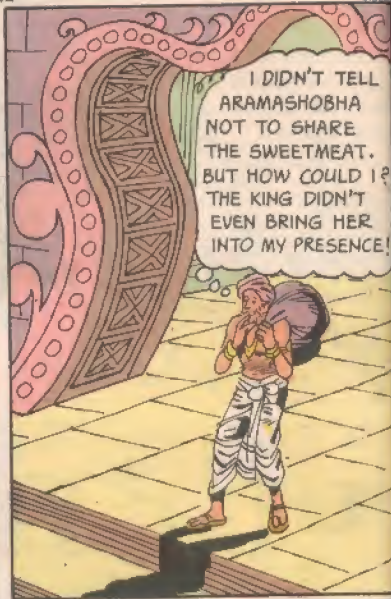
AFTER 50 MANY YEARS! I WONDER WHAT IT COULD BE!



TAKE THIS TO THE QUEEN AND HAVE SOME ORNAMENTS AND RICH GARMENTS BROUGHT HERE.




WHEN THEY WERE BROUGHT—



AS SOON AS AGNI SHARMA LEFT, THE KING WALKED INTO ARAMASHOBHA'S CHAMBER.




WHEN AGNI SHARMA RETURNED HOME —




DID YOU
GIVE IT TO
HER? DID YOU
SEE HER
EAT IT?

HOW COULD
I? SHE'S A
QUEEN. THE POT
WAS SENT TO
HER ROOM.



OH, WELL! SHE IS SURE
TO HAVE EATEN IT ALL
HERSELF. I'LL HAVE TO
BE PATIENT AND WAIT
FOR THE NEWS OF
HER DEATH.

SHE WAITED IN
VAIN. THEN ONE
DAY —



PERHAPS THE POISON
WAS NOT DEADLY ENOUGH.
I'LL SEND HER ANOTHER
SWEETMEAT WITH A
DEADLIER ONE.

BUT THE SECOND TIME TOO, THE YAKSHA FOILED HER EVIL PLANS BY REPLACING THE POISONED SWEETMEAT WITH A CELESTIAL ONE.



WHEN AGNI SHARMA RETURNED HOME AFTER HIS VISIT TO THE PALACE —

THIS TIME, TOO, I DID NOT SEE ARAMASHOBHA. BUT I LEARNT THAT SHE IS EXPECTING A BABY.

SHE'LL BE DEAD BEFORE THAT HAPPENS. NOTHING CAN SAVE HER.



MONTHS PASSED, BUT NO NEWS OF THE QUEEN'S DEATH REACHED HER. SO SHE MADE YET ANOTHER SWEETMEAT WITH THE DEADLIEST POISON SHE KNEW OF.

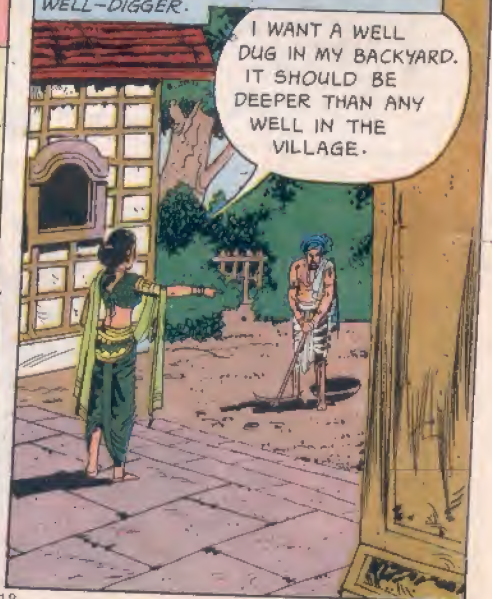
TAKE THIS TO ARAMASHOBHA AND BRING HER BACK WITH YOU. SHE MUST DELIVER HER FIRST CHILD IN HER MOTHER'S HOME. IF THE KING DOES NOT AGREE, FORCE HIM TO.

I WILL TRY.



AS SOON AS AGNI SHARMA LEFT, THE STEP-MOTHER SENT FOR THE VILLAGE WELL-DIGGER.

I WANT A WELL DUG IN MY BACKYARD. IT SHOULD BE DEEPER THAN ANY WELL IN THE VILLAGE.



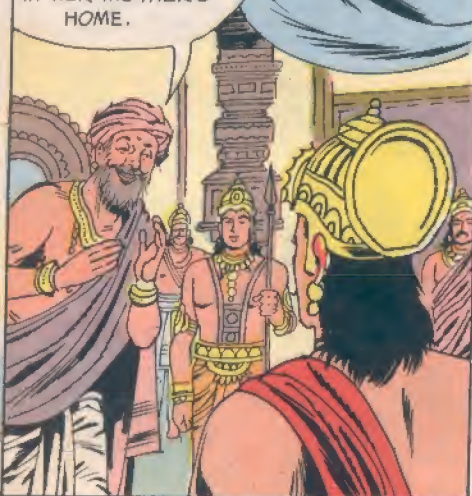
NOW, EVEN IF THE
POISON FAILS,
THE WELL WILL
NOT!



MEANWHILE, AS BEFORE, THE YAKSHA WAS
ALERT AND THE POT AGNI SHARMA GAVE TO
THE KING CONTAINED A HARMLESS
SWEETMEAT.



YOUR MAJESTY,
I WOULD LIKE TO
TAKE ARAMASHOBHA
HOME. HER FIRST
CHILD MUST BE BORN
IN HER MOTHER'S
HOME.



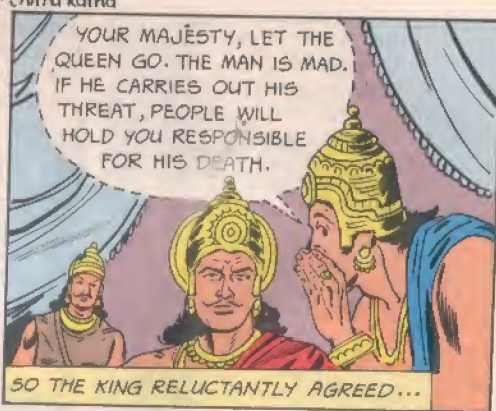
YOUR MAJESTY, OF
COURSE, MUST BE
AWARE OF THE
CUSTOM.

IMPOSSIBLE!
I CANNOT LET
HER GO WITH
YOU.





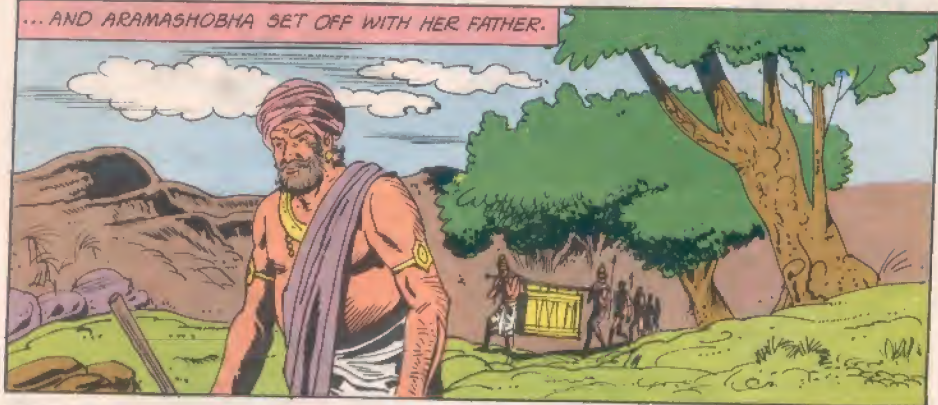
IF YOU DON'T SEND HER, I'LL GIVE UP MY LIFE RIGHT HERE.



YOUR MAJESTY, LET THE QUEEN GO. THE MAN IS MAD. IF HE CARRIES OUT HIS THREAT, PEOPLE WILL HOLD YOU RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS DEATH.

SO THE KING RELUCTANTLY AGREED...

... AND ARAMASHOBHA SET OFF WITH HER FATHER.

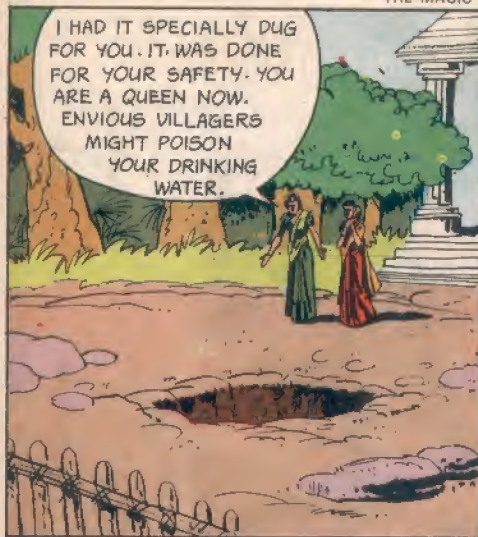


AT HOME, A FEW DAYS AFTER ARAMASHOBHA'S SON WAS BORN, SHE WAS OUT IN THE BACKYARD WITH HER STEP-MOTHER.

MOTHER, WHEN WAS THIS WELL DUG? IT WASN'T THERE WHEN I LEFT FOR PATALIPUTRA.



I HAD IT SPECIALLY DUG FOR YOU. IT WAS DONE FOR YOUR SAFETY. YOU ARE A QUEEN NOW. ENVIOUS VILLAGERS MIGHT POISON YOUR DRINKING WATER.



HOW KIND, HOW THOUGHTFUL OF YOU, MOTHER...



...TO...TO...



THE WICKED STEP-MOTHER HAD PUSHED ARAMASHOBHA INTO THE WELL! BUT SHE HAD FORGOTTEN ONE THING.

OH GOD! THE GROVE TOO HAS DISAPPEARED! I HADN'T THOUGHT OF THAT!



MEANWHILE —

O DEVA! SAVE ME!



THE DEVA HEARD HER CALL.



I'LL SLAY HER THIS MINUTE AND TAKE YOU TO THE PALACE.

NO! NO, PLEASE DON'T! THINK OF MY FATHER.



ALL RIGHT. THEN I'LL BUILD A HOME FOR YOU IN THE NETHER-WORLD BELOW THIS WELL, WHERE YOU SHALL KNOW NO WANT.



MEANWHILE WHEN THE MAIDS WHO HAD COME WITH THE MINISTER TO TAKE ARAMASHOBHA HOME, ENTERED HER CHAMBER, THEY HEARD THE STEP-MOTHER WAILING.

ALAS, MY DAUGHTER! SOMEONE HAS CAST AN EVIL EYE ON YOUR GOOD FORTUNE. WHERE IS YOUR BEAUTY? YOUR GRACE? WHAT WILL THE KING SAY?

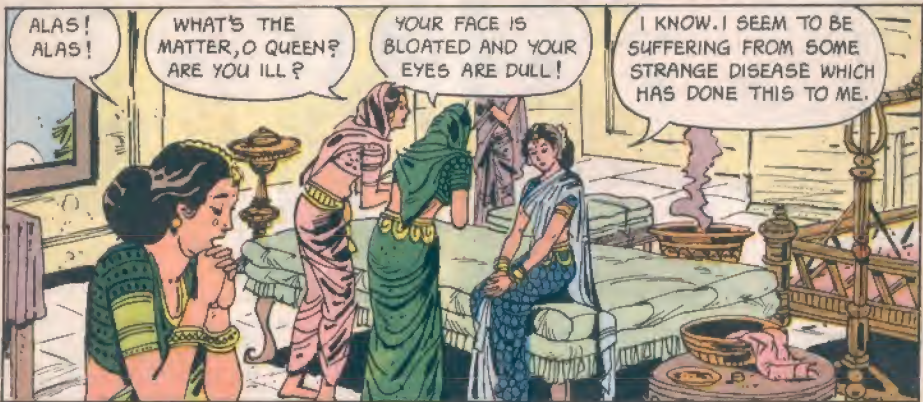


ALAS!
ALAS!

WHAT'S THE
MATTER, O QUEEN?
ARE YOU ILL?

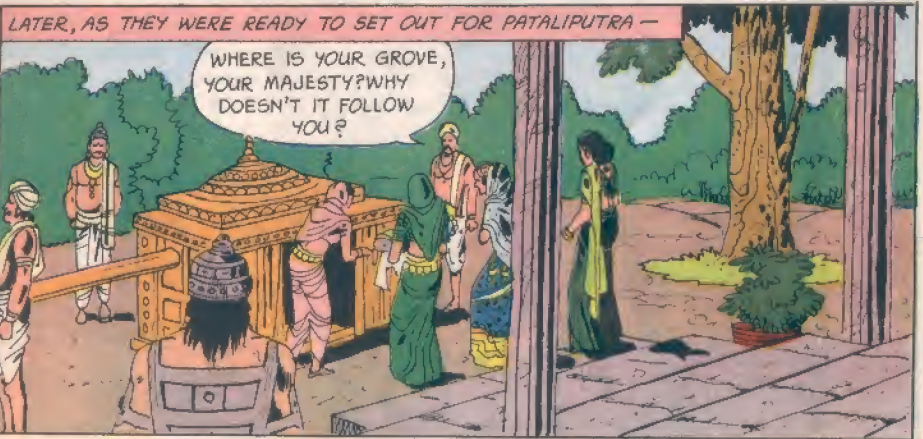
YOUR FACE IS
BLOATED AND YOUR
EYES ARE DULL!

I KNOW. I SEEM TO BE
SUFFERING FROM SOME
STRANGE DISEASE WHICH
HAS DONE THIS TO ME.



LATER, AS THEY WERE READY TO SET OUT FOR PATALIPUTRA —

WHERE IS YOUR GROVE,
YOUR MAJESTY? WHY
DOESN'T IT FOLLOW
YOU?



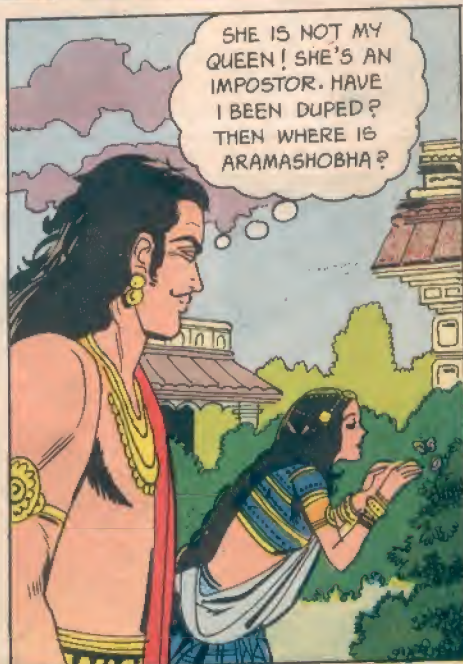
OH! IT HAS GONE TO THE WELL TO GET WATERED. IT WILL SOON FOLLOW.

WHEN THEY REACHED THE PALACE AT PATALIPUTRA, THE KING CAME OUT TO RECEIVE THEM.

AH! WHAT A BEAUTIFUL CHILD!

BUT WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU, MY BELOVED?

IT MUST BE SOME INTERNAL DISEASE OR DISORDER, MY LORD. IT HAPPENED SOON AFTER THE PRINCE WAS BORN.



MEANWHILE THOUGH SAFE AND COMFORTABLE, ARAMA-SHOBHA WAS UNHAPPY.

O DEVA, I LONG FOR MY SON. I WANT TO HOLD HIM IN MY ARMS.

ALL RIGHT, TONIGHT I'LL TRANSPORT YOU TO HIM. BUT YOU MUST RETURN BEFORE SUNRISE. IF YOU DON'T...

...A DEAD SNAKE WILL DROP FROM YOUR HAIR AND I CAN NEVER AGAIN COME TO YOUR AID.

I WILL SEE THAT I FULFIL THE CONDITION.

THAT NIGHT —

I'LL TAKE SOME FLOWERS AND FRUIT FROM MY GROVE BEFORE I LEAVE.

WHEN SHE REACHED THE PALACE —

OH, MY SON! MY DARLING SON!

ALL TOO SOON, THE HOURS FLEW PAST AND IT WAS TIME FOR HER TO DEPART.

I'LL COME BACK TONIGHT. TILL THEN, FAREWELL.



THE NEXT MORNING, WHEN THE BOY'S MAID AWOKE —

WHAT'S THIS? WHO COULD HAVE LEFT THOSE FRUITS AND FLOWERS HERE?



SHE IMMEDIATELY REPORTED THE MATTER TO THE KING.

...AND THEY ARE EXACTLY LIKE THE ONES THAT GREW IN THE QUEEN'S GROVE.

ASK THE QUEEN TO SEE ME IN THE PRINCE'S CHAMBER.



LATER —

HOW DID THESE GET HERE?

HOW DID THEY?

OH! THOSE! I BROUGHT THEM FOR OUR SON, FROM MY GROVE.

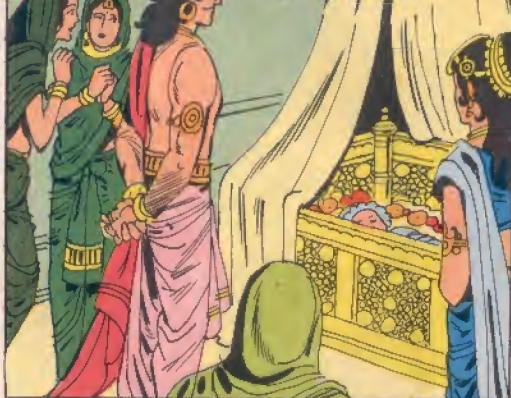


IS THAT SO ?
THEN BRING
ME SOME
JUST NOW.

NOT NOW, MY
LORD. I'LL
GET THEM
TONIGHT.

WHEN THE SAME THING HAPPENED THE NEXT
MORNING —

TOMORROW
NIGHT, I SHALL
KEEP WATCH.



IT'S HER !
MY BELOVED
QUEEN ! SHE
IS SAFE !

AH ! MY
DARLING !
I'VE
COME !



POOR ARAMASHO-
BHA, HOW SAD SHE
SOUNDS. HOW
MUCH SHE MUST
SUFFER!

WILL I EVER
BE ABLE TO
BE WITH
YOU ALL
DAY?


WHEN IT WAS ALMOST SUNRISE—

ALAS! I MUST
LEAVE YOU
NOW.

NO, YOU WON'T,
ARAMASHOBHA.


MY LORD, YOU!
PLEASE LET ME GO.
DON'T STOP ME
NOW. I'LL COME
BACK TONIGHT AND
TELL YOU ALL.

NO, ARAMASHOBHA.
NOW THAT I'VE FOUND
YOU, I WILL NOT
LET YOU GO.




PLEASE, MY LORD, IF YOU DON'T...

NO, MY QUEEN. TONIGHT IS TOO FAR OFF. TELL ME NOW. TELL ME ALL. TILL YOU DO, I WON'T LET GO OF YOUR HAND.




WHAT SHALL I DO? IF I BEGIN TO TELL HIM ALL THAT HAPPENED, I WON'T FINISH BEFORE DAWN. IF I DON'T, HE WON'T LEAVE ME. I HAVE NO CHOICE.


SO SHE BEGAN HER TALE, TRYING TO TELL IT AS FAST AS SHE COULD.



...AND THE DEVA SAID THAT IF I DIDN'T RETURN BEFORE SUNRISE...



... A DEAD SNAKE WOULD DROP FROM MY...



...HAIR. ALAS! IT'S HAPPENED. I AM UNDONE. I HAVE LOST MY DEVA. TO WHOM WILL I TURN NOW?

AND ARAMASHOBHA FAINTED.



WHEN SHE CAME TO —



TAKE HEART, MY DEAR. YOU WON'T NEED THE DEVA ANY MORE. SINCE I WON'T LET YOU OUT OF MY SIGHT, NO ONE CAN EVER HARM YOU AGAIN.

AS FOR YOUR STEP-SISTER, SHE SHALL BE SEVERELY BEATEN.

NO, MY LORD. SPARE HER FOR MY SAKE. SHE IS MY SISTER.



ALL RIGHT, I WILL. BUT SHE SHALL BE BANISHED FROM THE KINGDOM FOREVER WITH HER MOTHER.



ARAMASHOBHA AND THE KING LIVED HAPPILY FOR MANY YEARS, ENJOYING ALL THE LUXURIES OF LIFE. WHEN THEIR SON CAME OF AGE, THEY CROWNED HIM KING AND JOINED THE HOLY ORDER OF ACHARYA VIRABHADRA.